(vii) Price control exemption on domestic R&D based bulk drugs, (viii) Increasing the number of national awards for outstanding R&D achievements nd commercialisation of public funded R&D. (ix) Setting of Technology Development Board in September, 1996.

As per the latest official statistics available the R&D expenditure by the major scientific agencies and other Ministries/Departments of the Central Government has risen from Rs. 4710.51 crores in 1994-95 to Rs. 5817.76 crores in 1996-97.

(d) The country has made considerable ach ievements during the recent years in the field of science & technology. These achievements relate to various discipline of science & technology like Atomic Energy, Space, Biotechnology, Ocean Science, Industrial Research, Biomedical Research Agriculture, Computer Science, etc.

Development of Ceramic Industry in Rajasthan

2486. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that there is considerable scope for development of ceramic industry in Rajasthan;

(b) whether it is also a fact that ceramic industry can be developed in the State on a viable basis, if the availablity of Natural Gas assured; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) Although the State of Rajasthan has good deposits of important raw materails, yet the prospects of developing ceramic industry in Rajasthan has not been encouraging due to low per capita consumption of ceramic products and low market demand due to available of natural stones. Presently, there is only one ceramic tile unit and one sanitaryware unit in organised sector in Rajasthan and bulk of their production is sold outside the State.

(b) and (c) Economic viability of ceramic products industry depends upoii various factors such as infrastructural facilities, raw materail cost, market demand etc. As far as the natural gas availability in Rajasthan is concerned, the present and projected gas availablity from the domestic sources has been fully allocated. As a result, it will not be possible for the present to consider allocation of gas for ceramic industry in Rajasthan.